

17.01.18 – 10.03.18

& many others

with  
Vincent Bonin  
Douglas Curran  
Claire Harvie  
Aisha Sasha John  
Althea Thauberger  
Devin Brahma Waldman  
Jacob Wren

au-dehors

outside

Performing the sovereign  
and the foreign at  
Quebec's border

by Adam Kinner

# outside

## Performing the sovereign and the foreign at Quebec's border

*Outside names a place that can be  
named only in leaving.*

When you speak the word *inside* it resonates. Its sound verifies the room you are in. It returns to you as the sound you have just spoken and this echo indicates a performative truth. Outside is different. When you speak the word *outside* it runs the risk of being lost into a void or otherwise transformed. It's likely that your speaking will not be heard and it will become increasingly hard to verify that you have spoken at all. In this way, outside's performance is a paradox.

Outside's performance — which is also performance's outside, this paradox — is the thing that's going on here. It's happening in between, before outside's enclosure, beyond its provisional failure or recuperation, where it may not be verified. We are treading in places where language turns into sound or movement, and we are looking beyond the document, beyond the body or deep in its folds, beyond the word and its echo, beyond the collection, beyond or before and after the province and the nation, before the visible and after it, the place where sound becomes song, gets cut short and continues in thought.

I started this work after finding texts in Artex's collection, which Laurence Louppe, a dance critic from France, had written in the programs of early editions of the Festival International de Nouvelle Danse (FIND). These FIND programs, published by Parachute, included lengthy expository texts that would be rare in current programs of contemporary dance festivals. In her text for the 1992 festival, an edition focused on Quebec choreographers, Louppe was enlisted to help consolidate an identity for "la nouvelle danse Québécoise"<sup>1</sup> and, by extension, the "Québec body." Her analysis depended on glossing the "body of the Québec dancer" as unique due to its essentially embattled nature, a kind of underdog or "orphan." Its "dense core," which permits it to display intense emotion, was formed through its relation to an "unstable exteriority." Further, unlike dancers in the U.S., the Quebec dancer was charged with the task of creating "space that exists, which by the same token can permit existence." Her analysis was fascinating to me because of how it yoked the Quebec national narrative so forcefully onto the dancing body, mixing ideas of nation and self in seemingly self-evident readings of dance. These dances, I imagined, would be then presented so an audience could verify that in fact it's true: these are the ways of the Quebec dancing body, *this* is its essential nature.

I center Louppe's Quebec dancing body as a ghost that animates this exhibition because I want to continue the line of questioning that Louppe began in 1992<sup>2</sup>. As someone who cares about, and provisionally identifies as, the "Québec dancing body" Louppe writes of, I want to ask if the unstable exteriority that forms this dancing body can also permit existence outside, on the border of Quebec. Which is to say that I want to see if Louppe's shrewd reading of dance as a layered and complex poetics that moves across containers of nation and self can also be used to account for what cannot be included in the Quebec dancing body—that is, its self-imposed unstable exteriority. Which is to say, I want to ask if the Quebec dancing body has an outside that can be taken seriously, or if it can only be surrounded. More to the point: from this "dense core" of emotionality, I want to take the outside of Quebec seriously in my body, in the bodies of those I encounter and whose calls I hear, in the collection at Artex and elsewhere.

The dancing body, though, doesn't show up here in ways that this writing might lead you to presume it would. In looking at performance's outside, the dancing body is left out, or, rather, left "in;" dance as it might, it isn't necessarily given to visibility. Often the call for the dancing body to become visible is the call of the nation, the call of the sovereign. What other calls can we hear? And what of the invisible dancing body, the one caught between nation and self as two contradictory impulses, two irreconcilable gazes?

Instead, the works presented here play the spectral song of out-from-the-outside. They provide takes on the question of how to leave and consider how that leaving is also an arrival elsewhere. Like playing outside of the harmony or the rhythm of a song, like dancing or speaking on the edge of a nation, like fashioning an alien spaceship in your own image, these works perform what Fred Moten calls the "always already given possibility of the exteriority of the inside"<sup>3</sup> as a dance of sovereignty and foreignness across the containers of institutions, nations and bodies. Here the outside is crowded, we ignore it at our peril; it doesn't form us, rather, it calls.

Adam Kinner

Thank you Vincent, Noémie, Alexa, Ashlea and Claire for your help as interlocutors and thinkers. Thank you Aisha, Devin and Jacob for offering to appear here. And thank you to the Artex staff for your expert assistance and patience.

ISBN 978-2-923045-28-3

<sup>1</sup> All Louppe quotes are from the program of the Festival International de Nouvelle Danse, édition "Hommage à Montréal", Sept 29 à Oct 10, 1992, pages 13 – 17, included in this exhibition.

<sup>2</sup> Others have also done this and my work is indebted to them. Notably: Noémie Solomon's article "dancing a people to come: Variations on sovereignty in Québécois choreography" (forthcoming) and Erin Hurley's *National Performance: Representing Quebec from Expo '67 to Céline Dion* (University of Toronto Press, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> Fred Moten "Interpolation and Interpelation" p.33 from *Black and Blur* (Duke University Press, 2017).

## Program of events

### **February 8, 2018, 6 PM**

Musical performance by DEVIN BRAHJA WALDMAN

*Psagmeno: When I Look For Something Lost, First I Look In All The Wrong Places.*

### **March 1, 2018, 6 PM**

Performance and conversation with AISHA SASHA JOHN & JACOB WREN

---

## Biographies

ADAM KINNER (1984, Washington, D.C.) is a multidisciplinary artist living and working Montreal, Québec. He makes performances, music, videos, writing and works with artists in dance and theatre. His work has been presented in Montréal at Tangente, OFFTA, Studio 303, Usine C, the McCord Museum, SBC Gallery, Galerie UQAM, the Leonard & Bina Ellen Gallery and Innovations en Concert. He has also shown work in the U.S., Belgium, Turkey, Germany, the U.K. and Holland. In the summer of 2017, Kinner was a fellow at Vila Sul in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil. He has an M.A. in interdisciplinary performance from Concordia University, and a bachelor of music from McGill University.

VINCENT BONIN is an author and independent curator. He has produced various multi-faceted projects, notably *Documentary Protocols (1967-1975)*, resulting in a publication and two exhibitions, presented at Concordia University's Leonard & Bina Ellen Art Gallery between 2007 and 2008. He is co-curator of the exhibition *Materializing "Six Years": Lucy R. Lippard and the Emergence of Conceptual Art (2010-2013)*, presented at the Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art at the Brooklyn Museum; he also co-curated the Montreal section of the exhibition *Traffic: Conceptual Art in Canada 1965-1980*, presented across Canada. Besides his research on Conceptual art practices in the 1960s and 1970s, Bonin is interested in the social significance of archives and in the renewal of documentation practices in the contemporary art domain.

CLAIRE HARVIE is a photographer and artist living in Toronto. Her practice moves between creation and documentation, often collaborating with other artists. *All Images Are Unstable* was a recent study of the Chromatype process presented as a featured exhibition through CONTACT Photography Festival in 2015. Her work has also been shown at Gallery TPW, Gardiner Museum, Ryerson Artspace and Hart House at UofT.

AISHA SASHA JOHN is a poet, dancer and choreographer. Her solo performance *the aisha of is* premiered at the Whitney Museum in 2017, and will have its Canadian premiere at the MAI in April 2018. Aisha is the author of *I have to live.* (M&S, 2017), *The Shining Material* (BookThug, 2011), and *THOU* (BookThug, 2014)—finalist for both the Trillium and ReLit Poetry Awards. In addition to her solo work, she choreographed, performed and curated as a member of the collective WIVES (2015–2017). Her video work and text art have been exhibited in galleries (Doris McCarthy, Oakville Galleries) and was commissioned by Art Metropole as part of *Let's understand what it means to be here (together)*, a week-long public art performance residency during which Aisha and four collaborators made performances in Union Station's west wing. Aisha has an MFA in Creative Writing from the University of Guelph, and a BA in African Studies and Semiotics from the University of Toronto. She was born in Montreal.

ALTHEA THAUBERGER is an artist and filmmaker based in Vancouver, unceded Coast Salish Territories. Her practice is primarily concerned with the use of performative and collaborative processes in the production of new forms of social documents. Her locally and internationally produced projects involve long-term negotiations, co-operations and collaborations with individuals, communities and institutions in processes of their own representation. They invoke provocative reflections of social, political, and institutional power relations and create situations in which these dynamics may be challenged or break down.

DEVIN BRAHJA WALDMAN is a saxophonist, drummer, synthesizer player and composer who has appeared in venues such as The Whitney Museum of American Art, The Town Hall and Berlin Jazz Festival. He has performed with Patti Smith, Thurston Moore, Malcolm Mooney, Godspeed You! Black Emperor, CA Conrad and Sam Shalabi; and is a dancer in Adam Kinner's *The Weather In Times Square, Today*. He has collaborated with his aunt, poet Anne Waldman, since the age of ten. Waldman leads a NYC/Montreal group known as Brahja Waldman and is a member of NYC's Heroes Are Gang Leaders. Waldman is a co-producer for Fast Speaking Music— an independent poetry and music label which has released the works of Amiri Baraka, Meredith Monk, Eileen Myles and Joanne Kyger.

JACOB WREN makes literature, collaborative performances and exhibitions. His books include: *Unrehearsed Beauty*, *Families Are Formed Through Copulation*, *Revenge Fantasies of the Politically Dispossessed*, *Polyamorous Love Song* (a finalist for the 2013 Fence Modern Prize in Prose and one of The Globe and Mail's 100 best books of 2014) and *Rich and Poor* (a finalist for the 2016 Quebec Writers' Federation Paragraphe Huge MacLennan Prize for Fiction). Much of his performance work is made as Co-artistic Director of Montreal-based interdisciplinary group PME-ART, which he co-directs with Sylvie Lachance. PME-ART was nominated for the 27th Conseil des arts de Montréal's Grand-Prix in 2012, and has presented in more than forty-eight cities in Quebec, Canada, Europe, Japan and the United States over the last twenty years.

## List of works

### ***I asked the students in my French class to read a text by René Lévesque***

Adam Kinner

2018

series of six musical transcriptions on paper (20" x 28")

audio track (7 min, 33 sec), headphones

Six French-language students and recent immigrants to Québec recite the opening lines of *Option Québec*, a foundational document of the Québec sovereignty movement. Their speech is then transcribed into musical notation, suggesting the performative function of everyday language and its relation to identity and belonging.

Please note: An English translation of the René Lévesque text (an excerpt from *Option Québec*) can be found in the magazine *Public 14: Québec* on the table next to the gallery.

### ***Running between the Leonard and Bina Ellen Gallery, SBC gallery and VOX***

Vincent Bonin and Adam Kinner

2018

two-channel audio (26 min, 4 sec), speakers

In early November, Vincent and Adam ran from the Ellen Gallery to SBC to VOX. They held recording devices in their pockets to record the sound. The work is a cover version of Françoise Sullivan's *Promenade entre le musée d'art contemporain et le musée des beaux-arts de Montréal*, 1971.

### ***In Advance of the Landing : Folk Concepts of Outer Space***

Douglas Curran

1981

twelve postcards (5" x 6") with an envelope

Representations and recuperations of the alien litter western history as various testaments to the challenges that the imagined outside poses to sovereignty. Douglas Curran's photos of uncanny spaceships and rockets next to their (often white, male) creators evoke a sense of the vulnerability of sovereignty, the way it may be dependent on an exteriority that is nullified or otherwise controlled.

### ***US/Québec border, Québec side***

Adam Kinner

2016

photograph (8" x 12")

## List of works

### ***Collection / lights***

Adam Kinner with Claire Harvie  
2018

digital video (6 min, 42 sec)

A series of shots track the choreographies of the *Artex* collection and its surroundings, forming an experimental portrait of the institution. On the lights outside of the 2-22 building, advertisements for cultural events scroll by on the cultural "vitrine." These lights brighten and colour the reading room at *Artex*, from which a researcher can see dancers rehearsing nearby. Meanwhile the stacks are doing their own dance. The shelves choreograph and hold the collection, bringing certain artists and institutions into proximity and visibility, and suggesting the ways that objects, texts and practices might move or blur into one another, become intermixed and uncontained.

### ***Dance into Performance: Not A Pure Story***

Denis Lessard  
1989

five pages (8.5" x 11") displayed on a table

According to the author, this text was eventually published in 1989 with photos by Ormsby K. Ford, in pp. 6-7 of the *Festival Magazine* published by Contemporary Dancers Inc. and the Festival of Canadian Modern Dance in Winnipeg.

Outside the gallery:

### ***Msaskok***

Althea Thauberger with Monique Nolette-Ille and Phillipe Chartrand  
2012

video documentation (6 min, 46 sec)

Documentation of a performance event that was structured around a recitation by Monique Nolette-Ille, a prominent Odenak-based linguist and teacher of the Western Abenaki language. The story, *Msaskok*, is a contemporary re-telling of a traditional story by Abenaki writer Sylvain Rivard. The text was chosen by Nolette-Ille and translated to the Abenaki language by Phillipe Chartrand.

The performance took place in the neo-baroque Haskell Opera House—a building that physically straddles the international border of the two nation states that separate the Abenaki peoples. The building is increasingly monitored in the climate of post 9/11 border scrutiny. Nolette-Ille addressed the audience from the balcony, and the otherwise empty seating of the theatre, which is in the current jurisdiction of Vermont. The audience was seated on the stage, which is in the current jurisdiction of Québec.